

RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL OF BLORE HEATH.  
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF  
HEALTH FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER, 1904.

To the Rural District Council of Blore Heath.

Gentlemen,

I have the honour to present my annual report upon the health of your district for the year 1904.

Notwithstanding an epidemic of scarlet fever in the parishes of Ashley and Tyrley, and the nearly general prevalence of measles and whooping cough, the death-rate was a little under the average for Rural England and Wales.

PHYSICAL FEATURES & GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS.

The Rural Sanitary District of Blore Heath has an area of upwards of 13,660 acres, and comprises the three parishes of Ashley, Muckleston, and Tyrley. The parishes of Muckleston and Tyrley include some very fertile, highly-cultivated land, but as these parishes rise towards that of Ashley the land becomes poorer in quality. At Ashley begin the moorlands of Staffordshire, the Southern extremity of the Pennine range. Ashley Heath is upwards of 750 feet above sea level, and is the highest cultivated table land in England. The trend of the drainage of the district is for the most part westward to the River Tern, except the eastern portion of Ashley parish, which is drained by tributaries of the River Sow. The springs forming the source of the Market Drayton Water Company's supply are situated in the Burnt Woods. The mains run through the fields upon which the battle of Blore Heath was fought.

VITAL STATISTICS.

POPULATION.—The population of the district, estimated to the middle of 1904, was 2,117. The natural increase of population, that is the excess of births over deaths, was only 24 during the year. At the census of 1901, the number of inhabited houses was 466, with an average of 4.5 persons per house. The three parishes forming the district have a gradually decreasing population (except Muckleston, which has slightly increased since 1891), as shown by the last three census returns:—

| Parishes         | Population. |       |       |
|------------------|-------------|-------|-------|
|                  | 1881.       | 1891. | 1901. |
| Ashley .....     | 806         | 797   | 725   |
| Muckleston ..... | 763         | 707   | 727   |
| Tyrley .....     | 766         | 723   | 689   |
| Totals .....     | 2,335       | 2,227 | 2,141 |

MARRIAGES.—Seven marriages were registered in the district during the year.

BIRTHS.—The number of births registered was fifty-six, of which five were illegitimate. The birth-rate was 26.4 per 1,000 of the population per annum. The birth-rate of Rural England and Wales for 1904 was 26.8.

DEATHS.—Thirty deaths were registered in the district, and two residents died in a public institution outside the district, giving a death-rate of 15.1 per 1,000 of the estimated population per annum. The death-rate of Rural England and Wales for 1904 was 15.3 per 1,000.

CLASSIFICATION OF DEATHS.—Of the thirty-two deaths, eight were infants under one year, and nine were persons of the age of 65 and upwards—two of them attaining the age of 90. Six deaths were certified as due to Heart disease, five to Pneumonia, three to Cancer, three to Phthisis and other tubercular diseases, two to Bronchitis, two to Premature birth, and one to accidental burning. The causes of two deaths were not certified.

INFANTILE MORTALITY.—Eight infants under one year of age died during the year, equal to an infantile mortality rate of 142 per 1,000 births. This rate appears to be very high, but in the statistics of a small population it has not so much significance, for the addition or subtraction of a unit or two makes a wide difference in the rate—thus, two of the deaths resulted from premature

birth, and one from imperfect development at birth. If these three unavoidable deaths be deducted, the rate would be only 89 per 1,000 births, compared with that for Rural England and Wales of 125 per 1,000.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.—Fifty-seven cases of scarlet fever, two of erysipelas, and one of diphtheria were notified to me during the year, under the Infectious Diseases (Notification) Act, 1889. One death from scarlet fever, one from measles, and two from whooping cough occurred, giving a zymotic death-rate of 1.8 per 1,000 of the estimated population. The rate for Rural England and Wales for 1904 was 1.28.

SCARLET FEVER AT TYRLEY WHARF, HALES, AND ASHLEY.—An outbreak of scarlet fever occurred at Tyrley Wharf, in January, and extended to six cases in three houses. In February six cases in one house at Hales were notified. The origin of the infection could not be traced in either of these outbreaks. In May, the first case of the epidemic of scarlet fever at Ashley was notified, followed by thirteen more cases (of which one was fatal) in June. The schools were closed from 16th June to the beginning of August. One case was notified at the end of August, and one in September, but in October 17 cases were notified. The schools were again closed from October 14th to the end of November, after which only two cases were notified in the parish. Both outbreaks (which were of a mild character) were probably caused by the attendance at school of children who had had the disease slightly, and its infectious nature was undetected. But information reached me that at least two adults had been exposing themselves while in an infectious state. Your Council resolved to prosecute, but not sufficient evidence being forthcoming to ensure conviction, no action was taken. It cannot be too widely known that persons exposing themselves, or children in their charge, in public places, while suffering from any infectious disease, are liable to a penalty. The schools at Hales were closed for four weeks in November, on account of an outbreak of measles. Two cases of scarlet fever were removed to the Joint Isolation Hospital at Little Drayton, in September. A hospital at Prees Heath, near Whitchurch, is now available for the isolation of cases of small-pox, should any occur in the district.

VACCINATION.—The following are the statistics of vaccination in your district for the year 1904. Of the 56 children born and registered, 35 were successfully vaccinated, five died unvaccinated, the vaccination of two was postponed by medical certificate, two were removed out of the district, one was insusceptible, ten were not of age at end of the year, and one remains unvaccinated from the parents having conscientious objections to vaccination.

HOUSE ACCOMMODATION FOR THE WORKING CLASSES.—Owing to the decrease of population, the cottages in the district are sufficient in number, and generally in satisfactory condition. Where cases of insanitary conditions arise, they are reported to the Council either by myself or the Sanitary Inspector.

WATER SUPPLY.—The district generally is well supplied with water, derived chiefly from pumps and draw wells. But the water in many cases is liable to contamination through the faulty construction and the situation of the wells. I have examined twelve samples of water, three of which I found to be unsafe to use for drinking purposes.

FACTORY AND WORKSHOPS' ACT, 1901.—The administration of the Act is very limited in your district, there being only a few workshops and one factory. The Home Office official table is affixed to this report.

NUISANCES, Etc.—A summary of the work done by your Sanitary Inspector is given in an official table, also affixed to this report.

I am,

Yours faithfully,

A. MACQUEEN, M.D.

